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In the Western Teacher for December, 1907, appears a communication by William Hawley Smith, entitled Weergo, Weergeenees. The writer "happened into a high school and dropped into a beginning class in Latin". The teacher was drilling the class in forms of the third declension and had called for the declension of the word *virgo* and the visitor heard the words quoted, "Weergo, Weergeenees". After the declension the teacher asked for the English word derived from *virgo* and was unable to extract it from the class. Finally in despair she asked, "What state is Richmond the capital of?" and next, "How do you usually speak of Mary, the mother of Jesus?" and elicited the word 'virgin'. The visitor then asked the class how it was that none of them had thought of the answer and received the answer that "weergo, weergeenees don't sound a bit like virgin or Virginia".

The teacher on being questioned by the visitor made the following remarks:

I am thoroughly convinced that so far as real benefit to the high school pupils is concerned, it would be far better to teach them the English pronunciation of Latin. For the great bulk of these pupils, the chief benefit they will derive from their study of Latin will be the improvement of their English. Very few of them will ever go to college, and of those who do go, only a small per cent will ever become Latin scholars to amount to much. Because, she added, you and I know that the average college graduate never does get so that he can read Latin so very well, after all.

When the visitor asked, "But did not the Romans pronounce Latin as you are teaching your children to pronounce it?" the teacher replied:

As a matter of fact, no one knows whether they did or not. No one can tell now how the Romans pronounced their Latin. Some expert scholars have made a guess at it that has resulted in the method that most of the colleges now use. But no one *knows* anything about it. and then went on to say:

I am a graduate of — college (the name that should fill the blank was the name of one of the first colleges in this country) and my instructor in Latin was one of the finest language scholars in the United States; and he told us in class, one day, that as a matter of fact, no one knew anything about how the ancient Romans pronounced their words. And he further said that it was his candid opinion that so far as American students were concerned, it would be far more to their advantage if they were taught the English rather than the Roman or continental method of pronunciation.

Now the most of us can surmise the name of the college to which this teacher refers, as well as that of "one of the finest language scholars in the United States", whom she quotes. No doubt he had no intention of conveying a wrong impression, but none the less he did give the impression that the Latin scholars of the United States are teaching a lie and that they know it.

The whole point of this article is based upon a wrong presumption, namely, that children in the first year of the high school are familiar with out-of-the-way English; the English word 'virgin' is an unknown word to the vast majority of English-speaking youth. It is never used in ordinary English, and in the technical phrase 'Virgin Mary', or in the proper name 'Virginia', would almost never occur to the mind of a high school pupil. The teacher in question committed a pedagogical blunder in wasting the time of the class in trying to elicit the uncommon English derivative.

Two other fundamental errors need hardly be pointed out. The first is, that the correct teaching of a subject should be subordinated to the possible future of the pupils in a high school. The same principle would require us to teach mathematics wrongly, because most high school pupils are not going to continue the study of mathematics, or to do the same thing with any other subject. While it is true that few pupils are going to develop into finished Latinists, yet, as we have so often indicated, that is not the only or the most important intent of Latin teaching in the schools.

The next error is the assumption that any English-speaking people can acquire the pronunciation of any foreign language with absolute correctness without intimate association with those who speak the tongue and the consequent view that no attempt should be made to acquire the pronunciation as perfectly as possible in learning the language. That only needs to be mentioned for its absurdity to be apparent.

But this article gives point to what I have so often emphasized, the presence of uncertain elements within our own body, and the tendency of some of our best intentioned teachers to depreciate the efforts of the whole body of classical teaching by criticisms which are very specious to the unlearned multitude but convey no information or assistance to the classical band itself.